



NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 3, 2010

NEW LAW CHANGES TRAFFIC CITATION TRIAL DATE PROCEDURE

(CHEVY CHASE, MD) – The Chevy Chase Village Police are reminding motorists that if they receive a traffic citation on or after January 1, 2011, a new law requires the driver to request a trial date if they want one, instead of one being automatically assigned.

The new law gives drivers who receive a traffic citation three options:

- 1-Pay the full amount of the preset fine;
- 2-Request a hearing regarding sentencing and disposition in lieu of a trial, (meaning you do not dispute the truth of the facts as alleged in the citation, but you wish to be heard regarding sentencing); or
- 3-Request a trial date at the date, time and place established by the District Court.

The law requires that a person who received a citation make one of these three choices and notify the District Court within 30 days. If not, the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration will be notified and may take action to suspend the person's driver's license.

Previously, persons issued a citation were automatically given a trial date. The law required them to either pay the fine by the trial date, or appear in court that day to answer to the charge. Often, people waited until the day before, or even the day of trial to pay the fine. This meant the police officer who issued the citation was already scheduled to appear in court and it was too late to notify him or her that they were not needed to appear. This created scheduling difficulties for police officers and often incurred overtime expenditures for police departments required to have police officers present in court, even though they were not needed.

House Bill 829 and Senate Bill 560 were passed in the 2010 Maryland General Assembly Session and will become law on January 1st. Supporters of the new law believe this will increase efficiency in both the courts and police departments across Maryland.

Village Police believe the new law will eliminate needless trips to court and supervisors will be better able to schedule the deployment of personnel. The Chief of Police believes there will be an overall cost savings to the Department in overtime pay. They also believe the new procedure will keep officers on patrol who would otherwise be in court waiting for a case in which they ultimately were not needed.

The new law does not apply to citations issued for 'must appear' violations, such as drunk driving. Persons receiving citations for 'must appear' offenses will be automatically notified by either a circuit court or the District Court of a trial date and location where they must appear.

Information about the new procedure will be printed on citations given to motorists. Village Officers will be reminding motorists of the new procedure when citations are issued. Persons with questions can also visit the District Court of Maryland website at www.mdcourts.gov/district, or call 1-800-492-2656.
